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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

HAITI: AFTER DUVALIER, WHAT?

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
17 December 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Haiti: After Duvalier, What?

Summary

Francois Duvalier is likely to be succeeded by a man or a junta whose regime will closely resemble that of Duvalier. The military, despite Duvalier's depredations, is expected to play a central role in forming and maintaining any new government. Neither Haitian Communists nor non-Communist Haitian exile groups have the strength and organization to play a significant part in the immediate contest for power. No matter how Duvalier-like the new government is or how promptly it imposes itself, however, a period of confusion is bound to ensue. Haiti's Communists and possibly non-Communist exile groups can be expected to take advantage of this confusion in whatever ways they can. Immediate widespread violence is unlikely unless the scramble for power generates a bitter battle between the various elements of the military hierarchy and their proteges. In the longer run, however, a brutalized people gradually awakening from the repressive Duvalier era may rise and give explosive release to their pent-up passions.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates and the Directorate for Plans.

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1. The identity of President Duvalier's successor has been the subject of intense speculation for several years. The general consensus was, and still is, that the military will be an important element in creating the new government and in keeping it in office, but that any new government will be much like the old one--repressive, corrupt, at the service of the ruling elite, and inattentive to the awesome problems of the country. Initially, neither the Communist movement in Haiti nor the non-Communist or Communist exile groups are expected to play a significant role. But, no matter how similar to Duvalier the new ruler is, or however Duvalier-like the new government is, neither will immediately possess the total control Duvalier has over all aspects of life in Haiti. In the inevitable confusion, be it major or minor, the Communists in Haiti and the exiles--particularly the Communist exiles--can be expected to capitalize on any opportunity to regroup and act.

2. How the new government will come into being after Duvalier has also been widely conjectured. There is no conventional mechanism for the transfer of power in Haiti. Under "President-for-Life Duvalier," all institutions and elements of the state have been incorporated into a malignant Rube Goldberg contraption whose sole purpose is to keep Duvalier in power. Haiti has no vice president and no constitutional provision for presidential succession should the president die in office. Although Article 94 of the Constitution provides that the Council of Secretaries of State is to assume the president's duties if he is incapacitated, this provision has never been executed.

3. In most countries, a prominent political figure or someone already in the government could be expected to assume power. But in Haiti political parties are nonexistent, and real or apparent political ambition has proven a dangerous indulgence. Prestige and prominence are enjoyed only by those who evidence total loyalty to Duvalier, and then

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uneasily and irregularly. He has manipulated the ambitions of possible aspirants to power over the past 13 years so as to create rivalries and prevent the cultivation by any individual of sources of support that might give him political advantage.

4. Because the military has played an important political role throughout Haitian history, Duvalier has deliberately weakened it through purges, degradation of its capabilities, and by assuming personal control over the most effective units--the Military Department of the Presidential Guard (400 men); the Dessalines Battalion (800 men); and the Port-au-Prince Police (800 men). As instruments to curb the political potential of the military even more, Duvalier has turned to the National Security Volunteers Corps (VSN), which is a nationwide militia, and the Service Duvalier (SD), which is an amorphous group of Duvalier loyalists who perform various services at Duvalier's specific direction. The VSN acts as a counterforce to the military, and both the VSN and the SD are used by Duvalier as instruments of political repression and terror.

5. Available evidence indicates that the assumption of power through a revolution mounted by either the Communists or by the various exile groups is a nearly nonexistent possibility. The United Party of Haitian Communists (PUCH), formed in 1968 by a merger of the Moscow-supported Party of Popular Accord and the Cuban-backed United Haitian Democratic Party, is no present threat. The merger did lead to improved organization and cooperation, which by 1969 manifested itself in activity in Cazale, Boutilliers, and Savane Salle. But Duvalier's swift and brutal reaction wrecked the clandestine apparatus of the party, deprived it of much of its leadership, and disrupted its organization. To date there is little evidence that the party has repaired the crippling damages it incurred. The capability of the various exile groups to act effectively and rapidly is even less impressive than that of the Communists.

-3-

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6. Although Duvalier has often accused the Cuban Government of fomenting plans to overthrow his government or attempting to seize power upon his demise, evidence of such intentions has been vague. The weakness of the Communist movement in Haiti, and the nature of the opposition it would inevitably face from rivals for power, make it an unlikely vehicle to realize either Soviet or Cuban aspirations.

7. Cuba, and through Radio Peace and Progress, the USSR, continue to voice support for the Haitian Communists' calls for violent revolution as the only way for "the people" to achieve power. These calls have usually taken the form of radio propaganda broadcasts in the Creole language exhorting the people to unite behind Communist revolutionaries. There is no way to gauge the effectiveness of these broadcasts or the size of their audience. More tangible support to anti-Duvalierists in Haiti from Cuban or other Communist sources has been impossible to find in recent years, although Cuba is known to have harbored and given guerrilla training to approximately 100 Haitian Communist or pro-Communist exiles since 1959.

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When Duvalier passes from the scene, however, Cuba might consider the infiltration of men and/or supplies into Haiti worth the risk. This would be especially true if a period of general confusion and political uncertainty were to endure beyond a matter of a few days.

8. Because they are armed and their men in the palace will be among the first to know that

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something has happened to Duvalier, the army, (mainly the Presidential Guard and the Dessalines Battalion), the VSN, and the SD will be in the strongest position to act initially. Of these three, the army has the advantage because of better weapons, organization, discipline, and leadership, despite Duvalier's depredations. The key army units therefore can be expected to assume a major role in shaping the immediate form and character of the new government.

9. Although individual members of the military covet the office, no one man appears to have enough civilian backing to tip the balance in his favor. Efforts by different factions within the military to seize power could set off a bitterly destructive conflict between units. Therefore, it is possible that the military might agree on a temporary collective leadership, a junta, or choose a civilian to occupy the presidency at the pleasure of the military.

10. The most consistently prominent among potential successors to Duvalier are Clovis Desinor and Luckner Cambronne. Until Duvalier dismissed him as secretary of state for economy and finance in November 1970, Desinor was regarded as one of Duvalier's closest confidants and was often mentioned as a probable successor. There is some evidence that Desinor has held Communist sympathies in the past. That he has been neither imprisoned nor exiled suggests that Desinor's fall may not be fatal to his ambitions. Cambronne, a National Assembly deputy and a leader of the SD, rivals Desinor in faithful service to the President. Desinor has been described as "almost an alter ego of Duvalier":

Both men have used their positions to try to consolidate support for their eventual exercise of power in post-Duvalier Haiti and to enrich themselves at the expense of the public.

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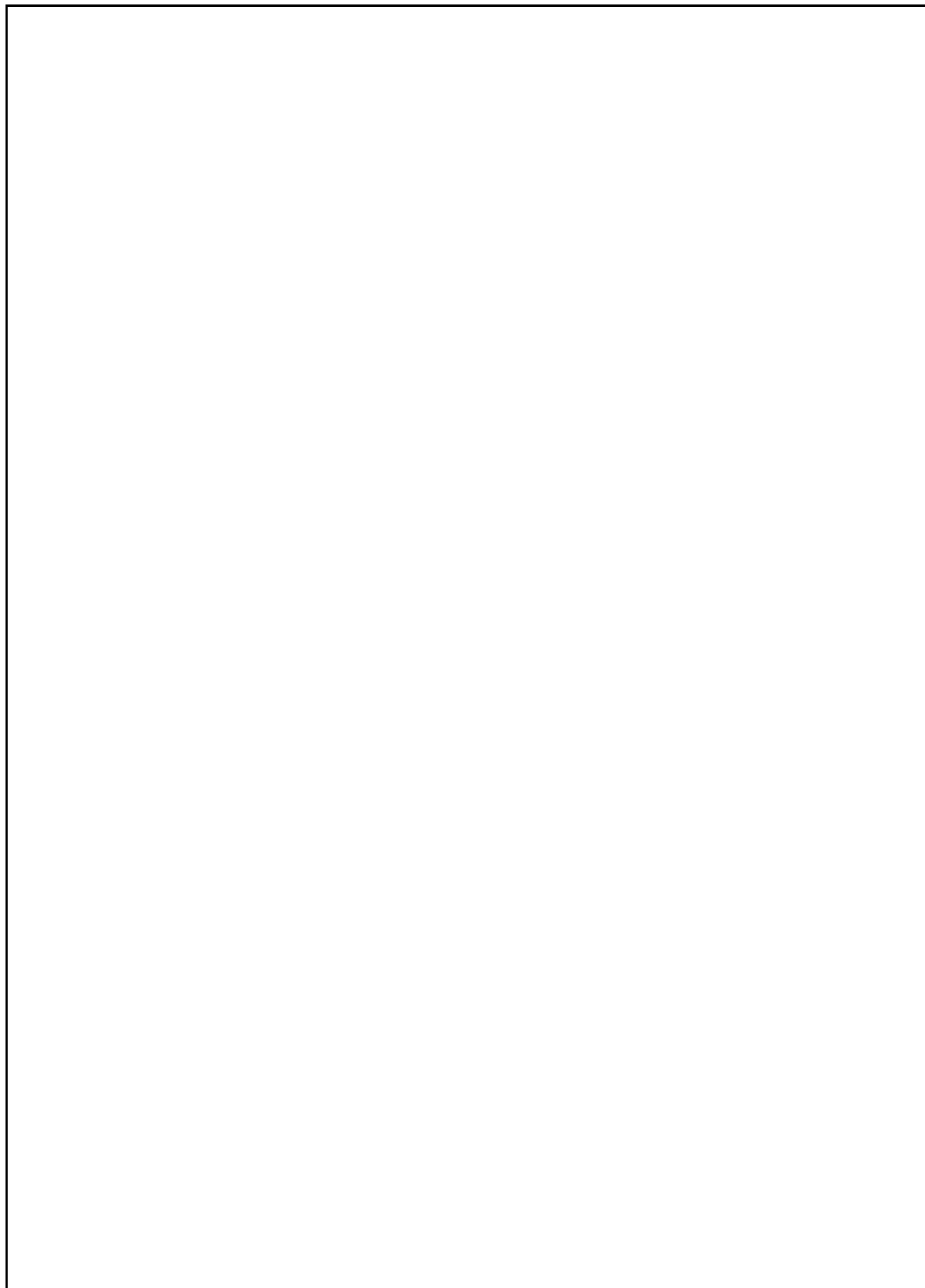
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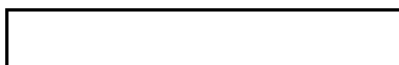
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- 6 -



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14. Although immediate chaos and violence are not anticipated, a dictatorship of Duvalier's caliber generates a tremendous momentum. In the immediate post-Duvalier period, contenders for power will capitalize as far as possible upon the residue of terror, constraint, and apathy the country has lived under since 1957. But unless the winner is as unique in his own way as is Duvalier, experience demonstrates that the gradual awakening of a repressed and terrorized people may end in an explosive release of years of pent-up passions in the form of violent disorders and bloody vendettas.

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